



Population risk perceptions of global warming in Australia

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Abstract:

INTRODUCTION: According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), global warming has the potential to dramatically disrupt some of life's essential requirements for health, water, air and food. Understanding how Australians perceive the risk of global warming is essential for climate change policy and planning. The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of, and socio-demographic factors associated with, high levels of perceived likelihood that global warming would worsen, concern for self and family and reported behaviour changes. **METHODS:** A module of questions on global warming was incorporated into the New South Wales Population Health Survey in the second quarter of 2007. This Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) was completed by a representative sample of 2004 adults. The weighted sample was comparable to the Australian population. Bivariate and multivariate statistical analyses were conducted to examine the socio-demographic and general health factors. **RESULTS:** Overall 62.1% perceived that global warming was likely to worsen; 56.3% were very or extremely concerned that they or their family would be directly affected by global warming; and 77.6% stated that they had made some level of change to the way they lived their lives, because of the possibility of global warming. After controlling for confounding factors, multivariate analyses revealed that those with high levels of psychological distress were 2.17 (Adjusted Odds Ratio (AOR)Euro Surveillance (Bulletin European Sur Les Maladies Transmissibles; European Communicable Disease Bulletin)2.17; CI: 1.16-4.03; PEuro Surveillance (Bulletin European Sur Les Maladies Transmissibles; European Communicable Disease Bulletin)0.015) times more likely to be concerned about global warming than those with low psychological distress levels. Those with a University degree or equivalent and those who lived in urban areas were significantly more likely to think that global warming would worsen compared to those without a University degree or equivalent and those who lived in the rural areas. Females were significantly (AOREuro Surveillance (Bulletin European Sur Les Maladies Transmissibles; European Communicable Disease Bulletin)1.69; CI: 1.23-2.33; PEuro Surveillance (Bulletin European Sur Les Maladies Transmissibles; European Communicable Disease Bulletin)0.001) more likely to report they had made changes to the way they lived their lives due to the risk of global warming. **CONCLUSIONS:** A high proportion of respondents reported that they perceived that global warming would worsen, were concerned that it would affect them and their families and had already made changes in their lives because of it. These findings support a readiness in the population to deal with global warming. Future research and programs are needed to investigate population-level strategies for future action.

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Resource Description

Communication: 

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change;
surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Public

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event, Temperature, Unspecified Exposure

Extreme Weather Event: Drought

Temperature: Fluctuations

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Rural, Urban

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Australasia

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Mental Health/Stress

Mental Health Effect/Stress: Mood Disorder

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Mitigation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Children, Elderly, Low Socioeconomic Status

Other Vulnerable Population: Female; People with low education

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified